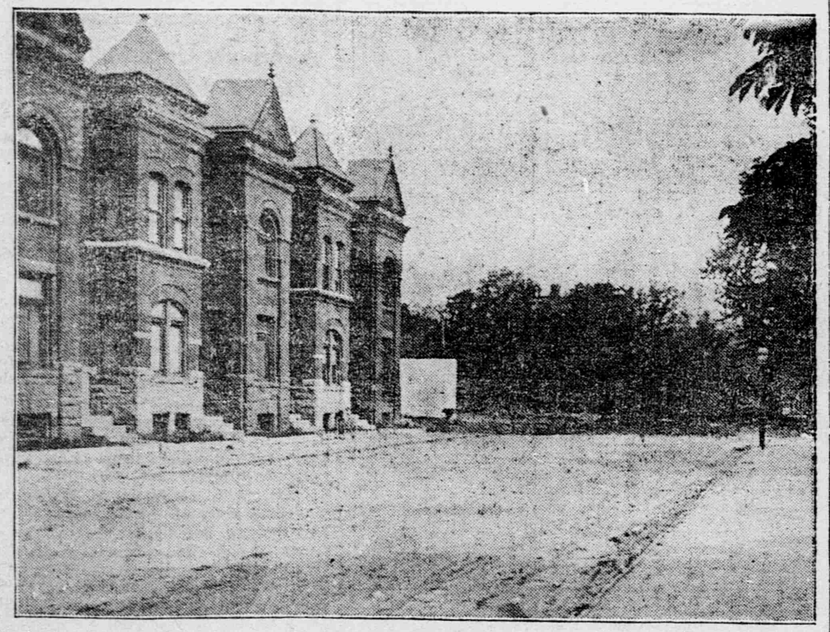
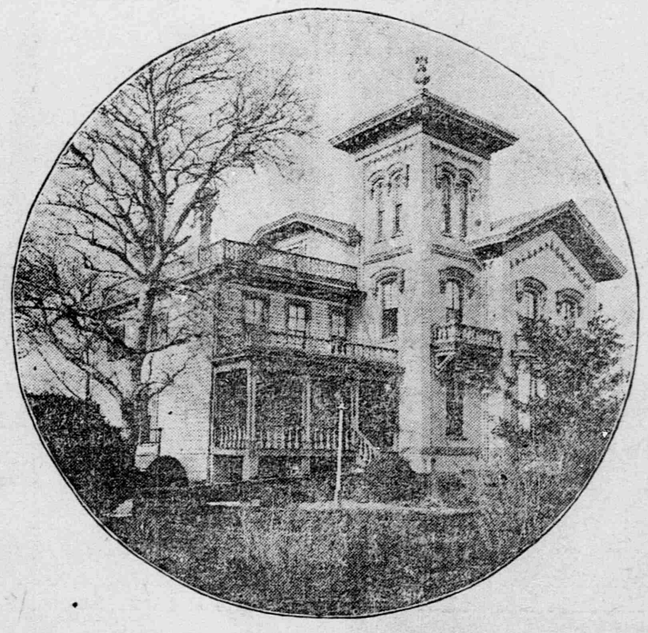
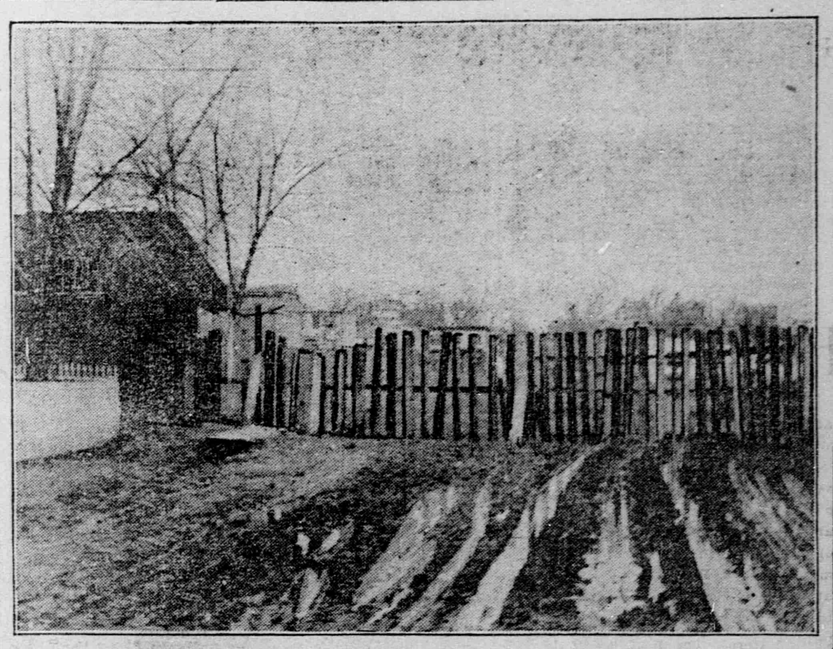
HOW LE DROIT PARK CAME TO BE ADDED TO THE CITY



Fifth Street, Formerly Larch Street.



The McClelland Residence.



One of the Barriers Erected During the "Fence War."

For Many Years the Section of Washington Known by That Name Had Practically Its Separate Government and Had All the Characteristics of a Country Town, Although Plainly Within the Boundary Limits.

IN that portion of Florida Avenue between Seventh and Eighth Streets northwest where the street cars of the Seventh Street line and the Ninth Street line pass over the same tracks, thousands of passengers are carried every day, and probably but few if any realize the fact that they are passing over a road older than the organization of the city, a road that dates back to the Revolutionary period—the Bladensburg Road, which connected Georgetown with Bladensburg before the location of the National Capital was determined.

The Map on the Wall.

If the people passing this point will note the little frame building occupied by a florist, 713 Florida Avenue northwest, they will observe that in front of these premises and fastened to the blacksmith shop adjoining is a goodly sized signboard on which is painted an old map of this section and showing the intersection of the old Bladensburg Road and Boundary Street, now known as Florida Avenue. From this map it is seen that Seventh Street Road intersects Boundary Street and the old Bladensburg Road at a point about 100 feet east of where the two roads join at an acute angle, and glancing along the lines of Boundary Street and the north lines of some buildings which have been erected in this angle we easily see the direction of the Bladensburg Road and discover that the small building 713 Florida Avenue northwest marks the spot where the Bladensburg Road deflected from Boundary Street and bore off in a northeasterly direction toward Bladensburg.

Once Part of Jamaica Vacancy.

The map referred to is said to be a portion of Jamaica and Smith's Vacancy, but if we examine the plats in the office of the Surveyor of the District we will hardly find on file any plats of those sections, but may learn that Le Droit Park was once a part of Jamaica and Smith's Vacancy and possibly a portion of Port Royal. Prior to the cession of the territory now included in the District from Maryland the land known as Jamaica was owned by one Philip R. Fendall, of Virginia. He conveyed this tract of 494 acres on the 12th day of January, 1792, to Samuel Blodgett, jr., of Massachusetts, and from this point the title of the land can be traced down to the present time.

The names attached to the different vacancies establish the names of the various owners of lands adjoining the Bladensburg Road at the time it was abandoned as a thoroughfare and taken up as a portion of the farms in that section, and the presence of this old road accounts for some of the peculiar lines in some of the northern boundaries of some of the lots in Le Droit Park. This road crossed Second Street at a point north of Elm Street here. The old plats show Moore's Vacancy. The road finally joined the present road to Bladensburg at a point where the sixth milestone of the northern line of the District was located.

It is probable that this peculiarly natural boundary of some of the lands which afterward became Le Droit Park may have had something to do with the strange lines which are found in the streets of that suburb, although it was not the intention at the time that Le Droit Park was subdivided to have the streets conform with the city streets.

Site of Campbell Hospital.

During the civil war the territory now contained in Le Droit Park was used as the site of Campbell General Hospital, one of the important hospitals near Washington. The hospital comprised some seventeen separate wooden buildings, erected in the form of a hollow square, with the central portion divided into irregular spaces by buildings cutting across the inclosure and connecting the outside buildings.

The larger dimension of this hospital was from north to south, and extended from Boundary Street, now known as Florida Avenue, on the south, to the land occupied for many years as a baseball park, situated south of Freedman's Hospital, and designated on some of the old maps as Levi Park. From east to west the hospital covered the ground from Seventh Street to what is now known as Fifth Street in Le Droit Park, and it is possible that a portion of the space between Fifth Street and Fourth Street was also included in the hospital inclosure.

At this time there were only two dwellings in the tract known afterward as Le Droit Park—the McClelland and the Gilman homesteads. Each included about ten acres of land used for grazing and garden purposes. The McClelland property and the Gilman property were divided by a row of large oak trees which were situated about fifty feet apart and continued from Florida Avenue, then Boundary Street, to the northern line of the park.

To the east of the Gilman tract was a narrow strip of land known as the Prather tract. East of this was Moore's Lane, now Second Street, and still to the east was the tracts of the Moores, George and David, covering the territory as far east as the present location of Lincoln Avenue, on which was located Harewood Hospital, another hospital of considerable note during the civil war.

T. R. Senior, who was commissary at Campbell Hospital, returned to the city some twelve years after the war closed and purchased a residence at the corner of Elm and Second Streets, where he now resides. Members of the family of David McClelland now occupy the old homestead on Second Street.

Following the close of the war it became necessary to provide for such of the freedmen as were in need of assistance. Campbell General Hospital was occupied by the freedmen until August 16, 1869, when the patients were transferred to the new Freedman's Hospital, which had been erected in connection with Howard University.

The property upon which Freedman's Hospital stands consisted of a tract of 150 acres and was purchased from John A. Smith. In April, 1867, Howardtown was laid out and soon after some 500 lots were sold, and at this time it seems that the idea was conveyed that streets would be opened to the south through the Miller tract. In April, 1870, the Howard University purchased the Miller tract, and laid out streets to connect the streets of Howardtown with the city streets, and a little later built four houses on the line of what is now known as Fourth Street and in 1872 subdivided the Miller tract, but for some reason the plat was not recorded.

In 1873 the Miller tract was sold by Howard University to A. Langdon, and a short time afterward A. L. Barber, formerly secretary of Howard University, became associated with Langdon as his partner, and by arrangements with D. McClelland, all of the three tracts known as the Miller tract, the McClelland tract, and the Gilman tract were united and subdivided, and in June, 1873, a subdivision known as Le Droit Park was placed on record in the surveyor's office. A subsequent plat was filed some eighteen months later, in which the proprietors of the subdivision declared it to be their purpose and intention to retain and control the ownership of all the streets platted, and the right to inclose the whole or any portion of the tracts or tract included in the subdivision and to locate and control all entrances and gates to the same.

During the autumn of 1873 A. L. Barber & Co. commenced the erection of fences across the north line of Le Droit Park, and from this time until August, 1891, fences were maintained along the northern line of the park. From 1886 to 1891 frequent fence wars were in operation. The fence across what is now Fourth Street would be removed by one party, and the opposing party would secure an injunction and restore it. This mode of procedure was repeated at various times until in 1901 a compromise verdict was agreed upon by the two factions and the fence was removed, Fourth Street was improved north of the park, and the streets of the park passed into the control of the city after a period of some eighteen years of private ownership.

Right of the Municipal Authorities to Have Control of the Streets Led to the Famous "Fence Wars" Which Raged Intermittently for Nearly Twenty Years --- Some Interesting History Reviewed.

The organization of Le Droit Park, under the limitations of the plat filed in 1873, was a peculiar experiment, that of the founding of an independent suburb adjoining the city. The southern line of the park was inclosed with a handsome combination iron and wood fence, some of which may now be found on the southern line of the McClelland property. Buildings were erected with plenty of room around them, and during the period from 1873 to 1885 the larger part of the buildings were planned and erected by James H. McGill. Double houses were quite common, but it was not until 1888 that such a thing as a row of houses was known in the park.

Before control of the streets was surrendered to the city the conditions existing in the park resembled closely those found in small country towns. Many of the inhabitants owned cows, which were pastured upon the vacant lots; the women "went a-neighboring," and the social life savored strongly of a village, and yet it was near the city. The express and telegraph messengers, however, always collected of residents an extra fee for the reason that they lived out of the city.

With the opening of the streets and the introduction of street cars the park soon lost its former characteristics and became a part of the city with all of its advantages and disadvantages. The opening of Rhode Island Avenue spoiled in a measure the former beauty of the McClelland and the Gilman homesteads, although there is still much more ground remaining in both of these old tracts that many people would care to own. The opening of Fifth Street will, to some extent, divide the traffic which now finds a way through Fourth Street. Sixth Street ends at Spruce Street, and further progress seems barred by the residence, 601 Spruce Street, and there seems no immediate chance of the extension of Third Street above its present limit, where progress is barred by a high fence decorated with the advertisement of a prominent firm.

Former Familiar Street Names.

The old names of the streets of the park, such as Harewood Avenue, Maple Avenue, Moore's Lane, Linden Street, Larch Street, Juniper Street, and Bohrer Street, are nearly forgotten, and have passed away with the fence and its period. The names of the city streets have taken their places, and with the growth of the population the country life and country scenes have given way to those of the city.

THE ARMY PRINTING OFFICE AT FORT MYER

By HUGH J. FEGAN

EVER since Will Caxton established the guild, in a dingy little Westminster street, generations of printers have gone on telling one-half the world the other half's affairs. Before Columbus started on his journey they were feeding that mighty appetite for gossip and today they toil on—unsung and almost unrewarded.

It is the more pleasant to find that at Fort Myer, Va., the craft is in respect, and has a place set apart for the exercise of its rites. In the basement of the Administration Building, at the end of the street where the officers' quarters are built, is the post-printing office, seldom found in army stations. You will not notice the small latticed windows, their sills flush with the lawn, and it is no easy matter to make an entrance into the shop, but the journey may repay the effort. A corner of the rock-lined cellar has been inclosed by two wooden partitions. The room thus made gives plenty of elbow-play, but is still small enough to be snug. It is about twenty feet by fifteen. The first thing that hits you between the eyes as you enter is a printed warning hung from the chandelier and worded with military directness:

"Things in this room are not to be removed—this means you."

Backing Up an Order.

As if to make good the command in case of trespass, Private Schmallzreidt's drawn saber is fixed to the wall across the scabbard, his dress cap hangs above, and a grim pair of holstered revolvers bear it company. Truly a cavalryman's crest—after the order of Napoleon's marshals, whose title to nobility was blows.

As the eye follows the outline of the room around you see his bed, for he sleeps in this cool office during the summer—under arms, as it were. A type case at which two can work, face to face, and a four-foot printing press—a mass of oily wheels, levers and cogs, not to be comprehended by the unmechanical mind—occupy nearly all the remaining space.

If you know how to go about it, and the gods have given you enough enthusiasm for the game, Private Schmallzreidt may let you set a stick of type. He appreciates, of course, the dignity of post-printer, but the brotherhood of newspaper men is broad and he thaws at once if you happen to be a member. Besides, the time is not so far past when even he knew nothing about the art preservative and had to learn it in this very office. Tell him that, as I did.

It is one of the most fascinating things in the world, this same type-setting—that is, the learning of it. The savor is gone once you know how and have to do it day after day to keep the pot a-boiling.

Almanacs to the contrary, officers and men believe Fort Myer is a warm post in summer. The coolness and quiet in the model little printing shop, however, is of a Sabbath quality. You stand at the case well out of the heat on the springy wooden step and set your "stick" as it should be set, in peace and close to Mother Nature's heart, for you are just at the surface of the ground outside. A glance as you finish a line and the eye travels down the company street toward the cemetery or the hazy and distant city. A glance as you finish another and you look across to the hills beyond the big plain where the drilling battery are "out for the dust."

Messages of the Types.

How many messages of grief and pleasure have these straight little letters borne in serried rank tto officer and man! They assemble like town criers on the occasion of every birth, wedding, and funeral, telling it to all who wish to hear. This "e" that I press in close here, it may have gone to the spelling of killed, promoted, dishonorably discharged, tortured by Apaches, married, enlisted, died—a bewildering number of tragic, comic, and melodramatic roles.

The limber-legged old type case has followed the fortunes of the Second Cavalry from New Mexico to Cuba. Like as not it has heard the Indian war-whoop, and heard stories of the same Indians' ugly handiwork. You can imagine its non-combatant knees shaking as the Spanish yell, and the music of the whizzing Mauser, came to its ears in Cuba. I dare say it knows as much of war as any grizzled first sergeant in the command. And the press is no recruit. It has seen seven years' service, enlisting when the type-case did, July, 1896. In that year almost every building at Fort Wyngate, New Mexico, was burned to the ground. The printing office was destroyed. Capt. L. M. Brett, of F troop, was stationed at the fort, and with the aid of the band and a couple of battery horses, he plowed a garden, planted vegetables, and triumphantly peddled his crop until enough money was made to buy the present outfit.

An Important Personage.

Private Schmallzreidt—a moment till I fix this space—is almost as much in demand at concerts and hops as the very musicians. The neat programs and dance cards, treasures of West Pointers afterward, are his work. Colonel Edgerly, Colonel Thompson, and Major Glennan write out the orders for their men, and Schmallzreidt sets them up in the same fashion that General Miles' orders are printed for the War Department. Then, too, there is a booklet containing a roster of commissioned and non-commissioned officers published each June. It shows the promotions, retirements, and deaths in the command for each year.

This pamphlet is a work of art, when the materials which go to its composition, and the result are compared.

Type-setting becomes mechanical after a while, and you can listen to every word the soldier and his comrade are saying as they lie stretched out on the grass near your window.

"Do ye mind Jimmie Macklin, Eddard? He's out in the Presidio now. Ye do? Well, a beamish boy he was and no mistake. I had a letter from him the other day. He's up to his ould tricks. It seems their's masquerades given inside the post by civilians. They was frequent and grand, but the price was high and the crowd select. Jimmie's mouth wathered for some of the good things to eat, and drink, more's the pity, but devil an inch could he get his nose inside the dure. One night—here's Captain Brett, salute!—Well as I was saying they give a big blowout on night, and Quality Street was there. 'Byes,' says Jimmie, 'how much money's in the crowd? They managed to scrape up $12. 'Hand this over and meet me at the flagstaff at 11, and I'll get ye all inside the masquerade!' Well, Eddard, he bought a ticket, $10, and he hired a suit. Then he went in, ate a full supper and slipped into a cloak room with a window opening on the grounds. The crowd was waiting for him and Harney climbed the lightnin' rod, changed suits with Jimmie, and went in to supper. Eddard, they kept that thing up until a dozen men had eat. Thin the folks began to notice that the yellow-domino had eaten more than he could hould. They smelled the rat and Gineral Ord—you never served with him—he comes runnin' up and tears the mask off Devlin, that was stuffin' himself, he being the thirteenth man. The upshot of it was court-martial for Macklin, but the judges was that convulsed wid laughter they let him off wid a light sintence. Eyah! That was a great time. How I wish I was there!"

The "Eagle's" Short Life.

March 26 of last year Private Schmallzreidt and Corporal Lamb, of F and D Troops, respectively, embarked upon the sea of journalism with "The Garrison Eagle." This paper was to be devoted to the interests of the post and countryside, and was intended to chronicle matters of moment to officers and men. A copy of the first and only edition, now somewhat of a rarity, lies on the desk before me. It has six pages, and is printed in Schmallzreidt's best style on yellow-tinted paper—the cavalry color. Leaders of breathless interest appear on the first page. One reads:

"Did you notice, the 'Eagle' costs less than 5 cents? You could not buy a chicken so cheap, man!"

A lifelike picture of the Second Cavalry charging at the Madison Square Garden tournament appears. The technique is much admired. Two bits of light and airy verse from the pen of Corporal Lamb lend the necessary tone of culture. One stanza reads:

Oh, Marion, I was feeling forlorn;
In my heart was pressing a thorn,
But you were in Illinois,
And I alone with the boys;
Yes, Marion, I was forlorn.

But what made the men gather round the "Eagle" and send up shout after shout of laughter was the "minor items." The wit in these is genuine, with a barrack-room flavor, delicate as a carbine-butt and pointed as a saber.

"Private Harry T. Mosher, of the band, took a short ride, mounted, Saturday. Watch his walk now."

"It was observed the other day that Death was in the family of the librarian. 'Twas his cat."

"Did you see her at the postoffice the other day, Slim?"

The "Eagle" was discontinued after the first issue. The men will tell you because Schmallzreidt and Lamb went bankrupt, but the large circulation contradicts this. May the "Eagle," however, prove no eagle, but a little Phoenix, and rise again on the newspaper horizon.

For those who have seen the Fort Myer printing shop this may call up some pleasant memories of half an hour spent there; for those who are beyond the pale and have not, there is no hope unless they go immediately and become familiar with very nook and cranny in it.

THE SUNSHINY DAY.

Spite o' the red thorns that wound us—
The storms that strike dark on the way—
The sorrow, the sighs,
An' the tear-shadowed eyes,
We'll get to the sunshiny day!

And after the sorrow the singing
Will make the wild weather seem May;
Far brighter the light
For the gloom o' the night
When we get to the sunshiny day!

THE "GREAT SEAL" OF THE UNITED STATES TREASURY

A CORRESPONDENT writes for information upon the legend or motto which encircles the seal imprinted upon United States bonds, Treasury notes, etc., which is "Thesaur. Amer. Septent. Sigil.," signifying apparently "Seal of the Treasury of North America."

The query has often been asked why this legend is not inscribed "Seal of the Treasury of the United States of America." What is known as the "Great Seal" of the Treasury of the United States, a fac simile of which appears on all the circulating notes and other pecuniary obligations of the Government, is a frequent subject of inquiry on the part of the people of an investigating turn of mind, the legend, which literally is "Seal of the Treasury of North America" suggesting an especial subject for inquiry. Why the seal should be that of the Treasury of North America is especially puzzling to almost every person familiar with the literal significance of the legend.

The history of the seal and of its adoption is not entirely clear. On September 26, 1778, the Continental Congress resolved that "a committee of three be appointed to prepare a seal for the Treasury and the Navy." The committee chosen in pursuance of that resolution consisted of Messrs. Witherspoon, Robert Morris, and R. H. Lee. At that time the Treasury was under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Finance or Board of the Treasury, and the navy was under the Board of Admiralty. The committee made a report recommending a device for the navy, but there is no record of a report having been made for the Treasury. A seal for the Treasury, however, was adopted, impressions of which are found on original papers in the files of the Register of the Treasury. Some minor changes have been made from time to time in this seal, but the seal now in use is substantially the same as that originally adopted.

The legend on the seal is "Thesaur. Amer. Septent. Sigil.," which is an abbreviation of "Thesauri Americae Septentrionalis Sigillum." The congress of the Confederation granted a charter to Robert Morris for the "Bank of North America," and the same authority authorized the establishing of a "Mint of North America," both these terms most likely originating with Robert Morris, who subsequently was a member of the committee to prepare a seal for the treasury and the navy. It is, therefore, highly probable that Robert Morris furnished the legend for the seal of the Treasury, which would explain the employment of the term "North America." The reason for using this term was probably owing to the fact that the fathers of the Republic confidently expected Canada would ultimately become a part of the new sovereignty, and be included in the independent colonies.

In 1774 the popular legislature of Canada was abolished by act of parliament and royal officers appointed to make laws for the province, except laws to raise taxes. This gave the British government a firm hold on Canada. Efforts were made in 1775, during the Revolution, to regain possession of Canada, but those efforts failed.

In 1849 Edward Stabler, of Sandy Springs, Montgomery county, Md., one of the foremost die-sinkers and seal engravers of his time, was commissioned to make a fac-simile of the original Treasury seal, which was worn from constant use and failed to make good impressions. Mr. Stabler suggested some minor changes in the way of improvement, but was instructed to copy the design exactly as it was, and "in accordance with the law." Diligent efforts have failed to discover any law on the subject